

REMARKS

Claims 1-28 are all the claims pending in the present application, new claims 26-28 having been added as indicated herein. Claims 1, 2, 19 and 22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Takasugi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,358,021). Claims 1-3, 5, 8-12, and 15-24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Takasugi. Claims 4, 6, and 7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Takasugi and further in view of JP 08-118918, hereinafter referred to as JP '918, and JP 62-059107, hereinafter referred to as JP '107. Claims 13 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Takasugi and further in view of DE 3738159, hereinafter referred to as German '159. Finally, claim 25 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Takasugi and further in view of Landers et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,176,766).

§102(b) Rejections (Takasugi) - Claims 1, 2, 19 and 22

Claims 1, 2, 19 and 22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) based on the reasons set forth on page 2 of the Office Action. Applicants traverse these rejections at least based on the following reasons.

A brief description of the primary reference Takasugi is as follows.

Takasugi is directed to a pneumatic tire having an asymmetric tread pattern in which ribs continuing in a tire circumferential direction are disposed on a tread surface at a shoulder end portion on the outer side of a vehicle when the tire is fitted to the vehicle, and block lines each comprising a plurality of blocks are disposed at a shoulder end portion on the inner side of the vehicle. Sub-grooves extending in a tire width-wise direction while forming right and left pairs are disposed on the portion of the tire more inward than the ribs at a predetermined pitch in the

tire circumferential direction and in a herringbone pattern widening in a direction opposite to a rotating direction of the tire. The apexes of the herringbone patterns are positioned on the outer side of the tire with respect to a tire equator line, and pairs of the right and left sub-grooves are made mutually discontinuous at the apexes. *See Abstract of Takasugi.*

With respect to independent claim 1, Applicants submit that Takasugi does not disclose or suggest at least, “a sum of groove volume in a circumferential direction in lateral grooves formed in a shoulder land part row corresponding to an axially inner side of the tire mounted on a vehicle per unit width is made smaller than a sum of groove volume in the circumferential direction in lateral grooves formed in a shoulder land part row corresponding to an axially outer side of the tire mounted on the vehicle,” as recited in claim 1. To satisfy the above-quoted feature, the Examiner alleges that the above-quoted feature is inherent in Takasugi. Specifically, the Examiner alleges that the volume of grooves in the rib 3 is less than the volume of lateral grooves in the block row 7. Applicants submit that even if, *arguendo*, the volume of the grooves in the rib 3 is less than the volume of lateral grooves in the block row 7, the grooves in the rib 3 are on the outer side of the tire of Takasugi, while the grooves in the block row 7 are on the inner side of the tire of Takasugi. The above-quoted feature of claim 1 describes that the sum of groove volume in lateral grooves formed in a shoulder land part row corresponding to an axially inner side of the tire mounted on a vehicle is made smaller than a sum of groove volume in the circumferential direction in lateral grooves formed in a shoulder land part row corresponding to an axially outer side of the tire mounted on the vehicle. Thus, different from claim 1, the Examiner is alleging that the sum of the volume of the grooves on the outer side of the tire of Takasugi is less than the sum of the volume of grooves on the inner side. Since the Examiner

clearly has not demonstrated that the above-quoted feature is satisfied by Takasugi, Applicants submit that Takasugi does not anticipate claim 1.

Applicants submit that dependent claims 2, 19 and 22 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependencies from independent claim 1.

Further, with respect to dependent claim 22, Applicants submit that the Examiner does not even address the features of this claim, and, based on Applicants' review, Takasugi does not satisfy each and every feature of claim 22.

§103(a) Rejections (Takasugi) - Claims 1-3, 5, 8-12 and 15-24

Claims 1-3, 5, 8-12 and 15-24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on the reasons set forth on pages 2-4 of the present Office Action. Applicants traverse these rejections at least based on the following reasons.

With respect to independent claim 1, Applicants submit that this claim is patentable over Takasugi at least based on the same reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1.

Applicants submit that dependent claims 2, 3, 5, 8-12 and 15-24 are patentable at least by virtue of their indirect or direct dependencies from independent claim 1.

Further, with respect to dependent claims 3, 5 and 8, the Examiner simply states that the features of these claims would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art. *See page 3 of the Office Action.* In response, Applicants submit that the Examiner has not established a prima facie case that the features in these claims are obvious. To establish a prima facie case of obviousness, the Examiner must, among other things, demonstrate that Takasugi discloses or suggests the features of claims 3, 5, and 8. Upon Applicants' review of Takasugi, the particular features of these claims are not taught or suggested by Takasugi. Moreover, the Examiner has

not demonstrated that the features of these claims would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art.

With respect to claims 8-12, 16-18 19 20, and 21, similar to above, the Examiner simply makes a general statement that the features of these respective claims would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art. Again, the Examiner has not provided any evidence to support these allegations, and, according to Applicants' review of Takasugi, these features are not taught or suggested therein.

§103(a) Rejections (Takasugi/JP '918/JP '107) - Claims 4, 6 and 7

First, Applicants submit that dependent claims 4, 6 and 7 are patentable at least by virtue of their direct or indirect dependencies from independent claim 1. JP '918 and JP '107 do not make up for the deficiencies of Takasugi.

Further, Applicants submit that even if, *arguendo*, JP '918 and JP '107 suggests forming holes in the shoulders of a tire tread to reduce wear, nowhere do any of the applied references, either alone or in combination, disclose or suggest at least the specific features, "wherein the shoulder land part row of the axially inner side is divided into two parts by a fine groove extending in a circumferential direction, and one divided portion located at a side of a tread end is a narrow-width rib and a plurality of small holes separated from the groove are formed in the other wide-width divided portion, which may be provided with lateral grooves," "wherein a total volume of plural small holes formed in the wide-width divided part at the shoulder land part row of the axially inner side in the circumferential direction of the tread is made larger at a side of the fine groove than at a side of the equatorial line of the tire," and "wherein the wide-width divided portion having small holes a tread structure contacting with ground in at least a part of small hole

forming region at a posture of applying a camber angle of -0.5° under an action of a load corresponding to 40% of a maximum load capacity,” as recited in claims 4, 6 and 7, respectively.

§103(a) Rejections (Takasugi/German ‘159) - Claims 13 and 14

With respect to the rejections of claims 13 and 14, the Examiner simply alleges that German ‘159 suggests forming ellipsoidal sipes 9 in ribs of a tread. However, the Examiner does not demonstrate that either of the applied references discloses or suggests at least, “wherein a center line of a rib of the central region land part row located nearest to the side of the equatorial line of the tire is biased to the axially inner side with respect to the equatorial line of the tire, and a plurality of recesses having substantially an ellipsoidal form are formed in this rib, and a major axis of each of the recesses is extended at an angle of $5-45^{\circ}$ with respect to the widthwise direction of the tread, and a side of the shoulder land part row in the rib at the axially inner side is defined by the circumferential main groove extending linearly,” as recited in claims 13 and 14.

§103(a) Rejections (Takasugi/Landers) - Claim 25

First, Applicants submit that claim 25 is patentable at least by virtue of its dependency from independent claim 1. Landers does not make up for the deficiencies of Takasugi.

Further, the Examiner does not even address the specific feature of a connecting portion between a rim and a disc of the wheel being located toward an outer side of a vehicle to be mounted with respect to the equatorial plane of the tire.

At least based on the reasons set forth above, Applicants submit that claims 1-25 are patentably distinguishable over the applied references.

Request for Interview

If the Examiner is not persuaded to withdraw the prior art rejections, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to contact the undersigned to further discuss these matter in an effort to resolve these matters.

New Claims

Finally, Applicants add new claims 26-28, as indicated herein, to provide a varying scope of coverage. Applicants submit that these new claims are patentable at least by virtue of their respective dependencies. Support for these new claims can be found at, e.g., page 32, lines 1-4, page 34, lines 19-24, and page 36, lines 6-7, of the originally filed specification.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

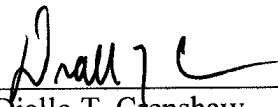
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